ABSTRACT OF THE DISCLOSURE

A method and apparatus for detecting defective semiconductor product markings is provided. In one embodiment, a reference character set is inputted and stored. Actual character markings are recognized as an actual character set using an Optical Character Recognition (OCR) technique. The actual character set is compared to the stored reference character set to determine if the product is properly marked. If the character sets match, the marking is proper, otherwise, it is defective. Also, if the actual character markings cannot be identified as characters using the OCR technique, the product marking can be immediately classified as defective without comparison to the reference character set. Many other embodiments are also provided.